

# U. S. Coast Guard Federal On Scene Coordinator Role in Vessel Salvage Scenarios

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## ABSTRACT

*Salvage operations must be conducted with the utmost concern for safety of personnel, as well as protection of the marine environment and property. Due to the highly dynamic circumstances involved in salvage operations, there is no standard or foolproof method for responding to a casualty. Therefore, contingency planning and pre-established relationships with industry become indispensable to ensure informed decision making, maximum responder cooperation and optimum asset coordination. The role of the U.S. Coast Guard Captain of the Port (COTP)/Federal On-Scene Coordinator (FOSC) during salvage response is multifaceted. While the COTP/FOSC has federal responsibilities to protect people, property and environment, it is achieved only through close coordination of multiple responding agencies, the response/salvage community and their resources. This successful coordination is greatly facilitated through the use of the Incident Command/Unified Command (ICS/UC) System. This paper describes the assets and authorities available to the COTP/FOSC during a salvage response, the critical role of the salvage master and his relationship to the COTP/FOSC and ICS, and the expected staffing and role of the salvage group/branch within ICS. This paper also presents the triggers or overriding issues that would initiate full or partial federalization of a salvage response, and the lessons learned from previous incidents that may prove beneficial in improving future salvage response.*

## INTRODUCTION

Salvage operations must be conducted with the utmost concern for safety of personnel, as well as protection of the marine environment and property. Due to the highly dynamic circumstances involved in salvage operations, there is no standard or foolproof method for responding to a casualty. Therefore, contingency planning and pre-established relationships with industry become indispensable to ensure informed decision making, maximum responder cooperation and optimum asset coordination. Regardless of the scenario specific details, there are common aspects of command, control, and communication, as well as Federal, State and Responsible Party (RP) duties in every salvage response scenario that must be understood and well exercised prior to an actual incident. Specific commonalities that this paper will address are:

- Assets and authorities available to the COTP/FOSC
- Role of Salvage Master and his relationship to the COTP/FOSC and ICS
- Appropriate staffing and role of Salvage Group/Branch within ICS
- Triggers and issues expanding the role of the COTP/FOSC
- Methodologies available to COTP/FOSC to expand federal operational control

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